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Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Twenty-fourth session of the Commission/ fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
6-10 April 1989

Item 6 of the provisional agenda**

MEDIUM-TERM PLAN, 1992-1997

Note by the secretariat

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* E/ECA/TPCW.10/1.
** E/ECA/CM.15/1.

A. THE PROCESS OF MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FORMULATION

1. The Secretary-General

1. According to regulation 3.1 of the regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation, and the methods of evaluation (ST/SGB/PPBME Rules/1(1987), "a medium-term plan shall be proposed by the Secretary-General". The associated rule 103.1 states: "Instructions shall be issued in accordance with the present regulations and rules for the formulation of the medium-term plan proposals. Heads of departments and offices .as defined in financial rule 101.2(c)| shall submit to the Secretary-General, proposals for the programmes falling within their area(s) of competence, in such detail, at such time, and through such channels as he may require".

2. Participation of sectoral, functional, and regional intergovernmental bodies

2. Regulation 3.12 states: 'The chapters of the proposed Medium-term Plan shall be reviewed by the relevant sectoral, functional and regional intergovernmental bodies, if possible during the regular cycle of their meetings prior to their review by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly". Accordingly, rule 103.2 states:

"(a) Programme managers shall prepare, in conformity with these Regulations and rules and with the instructions issued by the Secretary-General and under the policy guidance of the heads of departments and offices, a draft of their portions of the plan;

(b) Programme managers shall draft their portions of the plan in time for them to be reviewed by the organs referred to in regulation 3.13;

(c) When those organs are considering the proposed plan, the Secretariat shall draw their attention to the provisions of these Regulations and Rules;

(d) After this review has been completed, the submitting unit shall send the following documents, in the numbers and languages required, to the central secretariat units:

(i) The draft plan as presented to the relevant body;

(ii) That part of the report of the body covering its review of the draft plan and its recommendations for changes; and

(iii) The redrafted plan reflecting those recommendations where appropriate;

(e) When all specialized intergovernmental reviews have been completed and the above-mentioned documents received, the plans will

be adjusted to incorporate changes needed to ensure coherence, improve co-ordination and avoid overlapping. The formulation of the proposed medium-term plan shall be supervised by the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board. The financial information required will be prepared by the Office of Financial Services;

(f) The proposed plan will then be issued in fascicles as a General Assembly document. Only the Secretary-General's proposed plan will be made available to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council, and the General Assembly; and

(g) The plan, as approved by the General Assembly, will be printed as a single document."

3. Regulation 3.13 states: "The participation of sectoral, functional and regional organs in the formulation of the plan shall be reviewed by means of an appropriate preparation period. To that end, the Secretary-General shall provide proposals for the co-ordination of their calendars of meetings. Accordingly, rule 103.13 states: "To ensure that all intergovernmental organs concerned are appropriately involved in the planning process, the Secretary-General shall make proposals to the Committee on Conferences, with a view to co-ordinating the calendar of meetings.

4. The Secretary-General did make arrangements for the co-ordination of the calendar of meetings. However, as indicated below, other elements later intervened adversely.

B. NEW ELEMENTS IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING THE MEDIUM-TERM, 1992-1997

5. In accordance with regulation 3.9, the "Medium-term Plan shall cover a six-year period and be submitted to the General Assembly one year before the submission of the proposed programme budget covering the first biennium". Thus, in accordance with this regulation, the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995 should have been adopted by the General Assembly in 1988. In this connection, it will be recalled that in 1987, the secretariat submitted its proposal to the Conference of Ministers at its thirteenth meeting/twenty-second session of the Commission and that, that submission was to have been examined by an ad hoc Committee 1/ empowered to make recommendations to the Secretary-General on behalf of the Commission. Unfortunately, before the Committee could meet, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, had agreed to recommend to the General Assembly, as an exceptional measure, to extend the Medium-term Plan 1984-1989 to 1991 so that the new plan should be prepared for a period starting in 1992 to take account of the new situation arising from the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations and other decisions taken on the report of the Group by the General Assembly.

6. Unfortunately, it had taken longer than expected to put in place the new machinery introduced into the planning, programming and budgeting process as a result of the recommendations of the Group of 18. In particular, the

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1/ See resolution 617 (XXII) of 27 April 1987.

process of consultation with member States on the introduction to the medium plan and of negotiating the changes in the structure to the medium-term plan proposed by the Secretary-General had taken longer than expected. The result was that the guidelines for preparing the plan were not issued by the Controller on the instruction of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board until 9 March 1989 and not received by us until 11 March 1989.

C. RECOMMENDATION

7. Given the importance of the medium-term plan as the major policy directive of the United Nations and as the framework for the formulation of the biennial programme budgets within the period covered by the plan, the secretariat needed sufficient time to prepare its proposals and sufficient time to distribute them to member States. Similarly, given the important role which the Conference must play in ensuring that the proposals reflect member States' priorities as set out in legislation adopted by functional and regional intergovernmental bodies within their spheres of competence, member States need sufficient time to review the proposals at the national level before participating in the work of review by the intergovernmental body. Yet, the time between our receipt of the instructions and the time when TEPCOW which is the technical body to review the proposals and make recommendations to the Conference of Ministers for endorsement will start its meeting is only three weeks.

8. In the circumstances, we have decided to recommend to the Conference of Ministers to:

(a) Establish an open-ended ad hoc Committee with the members of the bureau as core members;

(b) Empower the ad hoc Committee to examine the proposals to be submitted by the secretariat and make appropriate recommendations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on behalf of the Commission; and

(c) Request the Committee to report through its Chairman on its work to the Conference of Ministers at its sixteenth meeting/twenty-fifth session of the Commission in 1990.